

For Immediate Release
[Date]

Contact: Library Director's Name
Phone Number
E-mail Address

[Your Library Name Here] Gets High-Tech Helping Hand from Library of Michigan and Gates Foundation Grants

Courtesy of the Library of Michigan's Reed Act/Gates Foundation Grant Program, LIBRARY NAME is one of nearly 300 Michigan libraries that recently received much-needed funding for broadband upgrades and related costs. LIBRARY NAME was awarded a grant of [nearly/more than] \$_____.

More than \$950,000 in federal and foundation grants provided the funding base for Michigan's public libraries, allowing them to improve Internet connectivity of public-access computers and give residents quicker and more equitable access to a wealth of Web resources. A special focus has been placed on those online services and programs geared to assist the unemployed, the underemployed and those simply seeking a career change.

The Reed Act/Gates Foundation grants make Michigan's libraries even better resources for their communities, said State Librarian Christie Pearson Brandau. When you want to learn about a new job option or a different industry, sometimes just knowing *where* to look is a big challenge. Thanks to this federal funding, hundreds of Michigan libraries are now better equipped to meet their customers' needs.

State residents seeking help with job searching, training opportunities and other employment resources may use public library computers to file online unemployment claims, study for employment tests, identify potential employers and prepare effective resumes.

Local libraries provide the perfect meeting place to bring the Internet to the community, especially the nearly one-half of all Americans who don't have a computer at home, said YOUR LIBRARY DIRECTOR. In addition, trained librarians and staff offer customers valuable support in crafting searches to find just the right resources for job opportunities and improved application skills.

At the LIBRARY NAME, patrons will soon see these grant dollars at work. [USE THIS PARAGRAPH ONLY IF you want to list some specifics at your library. Otherwise, delete.]

The Library of Michigan's Reed Act/Gates Foundation Grant Program used funding from the federal Reed Act and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to pay for broadband upgrades and the non-discounted portion of libraries' annual telecommunications and/or Internet service costs. Libraries in areas of high unemployment received funding priority. The program benefited 289 main and branch libraries, which will maintain their broadband services through federal E-rate discounts or through local funding.

The Library of Michigan originally used \$2 million of Reed Act funds to provide assistance to the state's unemployed workers. Some of those dollars made it possible for the library to purchase LearnATest, an online database offered free to Michigan residents through the Michigan eLibrary (www.mel.org). LearnATest features test-preparation materials and interactive practice tests to help users improve scores on a variety of academic, civil service, military, and professional licensing and certification exams.

Michigan's library cooperatives also received Reed Act funding through the Library of Michigan to provide training programs and resources to help library staff members better serve unemployed workers. More than 100 workshops have already been planned.

Michigan, which received \$482,160, was one of only 18 states to be awarded a Staying Connected grant through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Since 1998, the foundation has committed \$250 million to install more than 47,000 computers in nearly 11,000 public libraries around the country.

The Library of Michigan is an agency of the Department of History, Arts and Libraries (HAL). Dedicated to enriching the quality of life for Michigan residents by providing access to information, preserving and promoting Michigan's heritage and fostering cultural creativity, the department also includes the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, the Michigan Film Office and the Michigan Historical Center. For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/hal.